

Funding of Public Universities Panacea for Effective Implementation of Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS) in Nigeria

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Abstract: Recently, the National Universities Commission released the Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS) for official implementation in Nigerian universities. Implementation of the curriculum such as the Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS) required both availabilities of human and materials resources in the right quantities and qualities. Adequate funding is key for an effective curriculum implementation. This paper discussed the importance of adequate funding of the Nigerian university system as a panacea for the effective implementation of the Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS) in the universities. Secondary data were employed. The data were collected from print and online publications. This paper posits that adequate funding of the Nigerian university system will lead to the effective implementation of the Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS) in Nigerian universities. Adequate funding will also guarantee the provision of adequate staff (academic and non-academic staff), infrastructure facilities, instructional materials, capacity-building programmes and curriculum monitoring and evaluation. It is suggested that the federal and state governments should adequately fund the universities for effective implementation of the Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS) curriculum in universities across the country.

Keywords: Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards, Implementation, Universities.

Introduction

The Nigerian university system in Nigeria in recent times has been plagued with the problem of graduate employment. It has been observed that majorities of graduates from tertiary institutions especially universities are not employable. Ogunode, Ohibime, & Oluwaseun, (2023) noted that to address the problem of poor employability rate of Nigerian graduates and in keeping with the NUC mandate of making university education in Nigeria more responsive to the needs of society. The Federal Ministry of Education through the National Universities Commission has embarked on radical re-engineering of curricula in Nigerian universities to meet global standards and international best practices towards preparing Nigerian graduates for relevance in the fourth revolution world economy with the skills needed for the future.

The National Universities Commission commenced the journey to restructure the Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards BMAS in 2018, introducing it in its place, the Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS), to re-examine existing and introduce new disciplines and programmes in the Nigerian University System. In 2021, the National Universities Commission (NUC) inaugurated a committee of experts drawn from various disciplines in Nigerian universities to design the new core curriculum and minimum academic standards for universities.

The process of planning and development of the new curriculum involves stakeholders in the university education system which include academic experts, academies, government (represented by NUC), professional bodies and of course, the private sector represented by the Nigerian Economic Summit Group (NESG). According to Executive Secretary of NUC, Professor Abubakar Rasheed the new CCMAS is a product of sustained stakeholder interactions over two years. The composition of each panel took into consideration, the triple helix model, as a unique feature. This, he said, involved a blend of academic experts, academies, government (represented by NUC), professional bodies and of course, the private sector represented by the Nigerian Economic Summit Group (NESG) (Champion, 2022).

The Federal Ministry of Education and the National Universities Commission (NUC) approved the new curriculum titled Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS) and presented it officially on December 6th, 2022 to the university communities for implementation. The Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards (BMAS) has been revised to Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS). "The CCMAS provides 70 percent of what should be taught along with the expected outcome, while the university will provide 30 percent based on their contextual peculiarities and characteristics (Ogunode, Ohibime & Oluwaseun 2023).

Curriculum implementation in Nigeria is faced with many challenges such as funding problems.

Ohibime & Mohammed (2022); Akin-Ibidiran, Yemi, Ogunode, & Ibidiran (2022) observed that the poor funding of Nigerian universities has affected the implementation of the curriculum in the various universities across the country. Ogunode et al (2023) concluded that poor funding of public universities may be a problem to the implementation of the new Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS) in Nigerian universities. Based on this background, the paper examined the importance of adequate funding of the Nigerian university system as a panacea for the effective implementation of the Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS) in the universities.

Concept of Curriculum Implementation

Curriculum implementation is the used of curriculum programme in the school as planned for teaching and learning. Onyeachu(2008) defined curriculum implementation as the process of putting all that have been planned as a curriculum document in to practice in the classroom through the combined efforts of teachers, learners, school administrators, parents as well as interaction with physical facilities, instructional materials, psychological and social environments". Curriculum implementation as the task of translating the curriculum document into the operating curriculum by the combined efforts of the students, teachers and others concerned, that is, curriculum implementation demands concerted efforts of end-users of the curriculum for its effective implementation at all levels in order to achieve the desired goals. Curriculum implementation is the execution of curriculum programme in the school through the curriculum agent (Ogunode, Ohibime, & Oluwaseun, 2023). Obanya (2004) defined the implementation of curriculum as day-to-day activities which school management and classroom teachers undertake in the pursuit of the objective of any given curriculum. Curriculum implementation entails putting into practice the officially prescribed courses of study, syllabuses and subjects (Chikumbi & Makamure 2000). Okebukola (2004) defined curriculum implementation as the transition of the objectives of the curriculum from paper to practice. That is, only effective curriculum implementation ensures achievement of the objectives for which the curriculum was designed to attain. Ivowi (2004) viewed curriculum implementation as the translation of theory into practice, or proposal into action.

Concept of Adequate Funding

The development of an educational institution depends to some extent on the availability of funds for its internal administration and curriculum implementation. Nwafor, Uchendu, & Akani, (2015) opined that the level of success recorded by the educational sector has been closely linked

with the availability of resources. Among the resources needed for the effective administration of the educational sector, funding has been identified as an indispensable instrument. This is because funding serves as the life wire for the management and administration of most sectors of the economy including the educational sector. It is based on this fact that UNESCO recommended that 26% of the annual budget of any nation should be set aside for the administration and management of the educational sector (Odia & Omofonmwan, 2007).

Funding is considered all over the world as the life wire that propels the educational sector towards achieving its objectives. This is because such a funding strategy will assist in providing the basic resources needed for teaching and learning both in terms of quality and quantity (Nwafor, et al, 2015).

In every educational institution, funds serve as an important resource that is needed by school administration and for the implementation of the school curriculum. However, funds remain one of the scarce resources that are in short supply among most organizations including schools. Based on this situation, schools like all other organizations usually develop alternative means of securing adequate funds to manage their various activities. These funds can be generated either within or outside the school from both educational and non-educational services (Nwafor, et al 2015).

Adequate funding is a criterion for the development and sustainability of educational institutions. Funding determined the level of implementation of the school programme, especially the curriculum. Adequate funding of educational institutions is the provision of substantial monies in the right quantities for the administration and management of educational institutions. Adequate funding of educational institutions refers to a budgetary allocation to the schools that are optimal for the operation and implementation of the school' programme. Adequate funding of educational institutions is the formal allocation given to educational institutions that cover the short-run cost and long-run cost. Adequate funding of educational institutions is the funds schools receive that cover their recurrent cost and capital cost for a year.

Adequate funding of educational institutions (education) can also be viewed as meeting up with the various international requirement or policies formulated by either national or international organizations for the educational sector. For instance, the National policy of the education Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) in Section 10 subsection 153-155, stated that education is a capital-intensive social service, which requires adequate financial provisions from all tiers of government for the successful implementation of its programmes. The government's ultimate goal is to make education free at all levels in addition to assistance from International and Local Development Partners, grants for research and other donor agencies. The financing of education is a joint responsibility of the Federal, State/FCT, Local Governments and the private sector. In this connection, the government welcomes and encourages the participation of local communities, individuals and organisations. Efforts towards the improvement in the funding of education at all levels shall include Increased government investment in education to eliminate the deficiency in public investment between Nigeria and other Sub-Saharan and developing countries. At least 26% (UNESCO minimum standard recommendation) of the Federal, State and Local Governments budget should be dedicated to the funding of education at all levels (FRN, 2013)

Also, the documents titled 'Education for All, EFA, 2000-2015: achievement and challenges' and 'World Education Forum (2015) final report designed by UNESCO, a Dakar framework for action, called for a significant increase in a financial commitment by national governments and donors to the education sector to accelerate progress toward the EFA goals. According to the document, the EFA recommended that 4 per cent to 6 per cent of the GDP or 15 per cent to 20 per cent of their (government) budget should be allocated to education. To the UNESCO standard, countries are expected to budget at least 15-20 percent of their national budget for education.

Countries can invest more than the standard or requirement set depending on their development and priorities while Countries that are investing below can be viewed as not investing in education accordingly.

In Nigeria, university education receives more allocation than every other form of education which include secondary school education and primary school education. Despite the federal and state government investment in university education, stakeholders in university education management and administration are still calling for more investment in the sector. Adequate investment or funding of the universities is key to the implementation of the university programme, especially the curriculum.

Adequate Funding of Public Universities Panacea for Effective Implementation of Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS) in Nigeria

Adequate funding of the Nigerian university system is critical to the effective implementation of the curriculum in the respective institutions. Adequate funding will guarantee the provision of adequate staff, infrastructure facilities, instructional materials, capacity-building programmes and curriculum monitoring and evaluation.

Adequate Staff (Academic staff and Non-academic Staff)

The effective implementation of any curriculum requires competent professional staff such as teaching and non-teaching staff and the right experiences and qualification. It involves professionals and experts with experience who will be willing to explore various techniques of the curriculum without being afraid of failure. Ekwueme, Dorothy, Ngozi, Anyikwa & Micheal, (2009) submitted that the importance of lecturers in curriculum planning, development and most importantly implementation cannot be overemphasized. According to Ogunode, Jegede, & Abubakar, (2020) and Ogunode, & Olaitan, (2023), the main duties and responsibilities of academic staff in higher institutions include: teaching at undergraduate and graduate level in areas allocated and reviewed from time to time by the Head of Department; to carry out research and produce publications, or other research outputs, in line with personal objectives agreed in the Staff review process; to obtain research funding support; to engage with the broader scholarly and professional communities; to supervise or assist with supervision of undergraduate, taught graduate (Masters) or research graduate (MPhil/PhD) students; to contribute to the development, planning and implementation of a high-quality curriculum, to assist in the development of learning materials, preparing schemes of work and maintaining records to monitor student progress, achievement and attendance. Adequate academic staff with the right qualifications and experiences are the requisite criteria for the implementation of new curricula like the Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS). Adequate and qualified staff is compulsory resources needed for the implementation of the curriculum. A major setback in effective curriculum implementation is the problem of unqualified lecturers, especially specialist teachers in areas like medicine, ICT and technical subjects. In recent times, the curriculum is designed up to implementation without adequate manpower to translate these documents into reality. Ogunode (2020) noted that majorities of public universities in Nigeria, due to a shortage of lecturers, the requirements of BMAS are no longer strictly observed. In addition, there remains an acute shortage of specialist lecturers for science programmes like medicine, ICT and Engineering, which is manifested in the poor implementation of the curriculum in various universities. Ajibola (2008) also pointed out that most of the lecturers do not have a PhD as required for teaching in the universities. Ogunode, Olaoye, & Yakubu, (2023) concluded that adequate funding of the universities will guarantee full employment of academic and non-academic staff in the universities and this will definitely help in effective implementation of the Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS) in the Nigerian universities.

Infrastructure Facilities

Adequate funding of public universities in Nigeria will help to provide adequate infrastructural facilities for easy implementation of the new Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic

Standards (CCMAS). According to Tunde & Issa (2013), adequate investment in public universities is a key to the development of infrastructural facilities. Ogunode (2020) views infrastructure facilities as those facilities aiding the delivery of academic and non-academic services in educational institutions. Infrastructural facilities include; libraries, laboratories, halls, offices, administrative blocks, hostels, road facilities, water, electricity, internet etc. Ayoko, Peter & Jegede (2023) affirmed that the realization of the universities' goals and objectives depends on the availability of adequate human and material resources and these Infrastructural facilities in majorities of public universities in Nigeria are in short supply. Poor infrastructure facilities development in some public universities has contributed to poor marketing of the universities.

The availability of infrastructural facilities in adequate quantities will support the effective implementation of curriculum and the inadequacies will hamper curriculum implementation in educational institutions. Ekwueme, et al (2009) posited that without the availability of functional infrastructures in the schools, the skill-based curriculum will not be effectively implemented in Nigeria, and youth would lack skill acquisition and economic empowerment. This is because youth cannot carry out meaningful work due to a lack of acquisition of basic skills that promote effective work performance. It is also noted most of the pieces of equipment, tools, and workshop facilities are either broken down or damaged or dilapidated and they are not replaced or renovated (Puyate, 2006; Ebehikhalu, & Dawam, 2016). Proper funding of universities in Nigeria will help in infrastructure facilities development and help in the solving of the infrastructure facilities gap (Ogunode, Ohibime, & Jedege 2023).

Instructional Materials

The Universities must be adequately funded to be able to provide all needed human and material resources for the smooth implementation of the curriculum. Funding is critical for the development of curriculum and curriculum implementation. Instructional materials are one of the resources required for the effective implementation of the curriculum in the school. The school system is designed to function with the application and deployment of instructional materials. Instructional materials are very essential to the development of education. Instructional materials are one of the critical components of the educational system. Ogunode & Josiah (2023) defined instructional materials as educational resources assembled by the teachers to implement teaching programmes in the classroom. Instructional materials are special educational resources that aid the teachers to deliver the lesson. Fadeiye (2005) viewed instructional materials as visual and audio-visual aids, concrete or non-concrete, used by teachers to improve the quality of teaching and learning activities in schools. Ogunode, & Obi-Ezenekwe (2021) and Ogunode & Josiah (2023) stated that the resources are influencing the implementation of teaching, research and community service in the various tertiary institutions. In secondary schools, instructional materials are supporting teaching and learning. Teachers in educational institutions teach well with the deployment of instructional materials. Instructional materials serve as a channel between the teacher and the students in delivering instructions. They may also serve as the motivation for the teaching-learning process. It is used to get the attention of the students and eliminate boredom. According to Quadri et al., (2003), the usefulness of instructional materials is based upon the following ideas that learning is more likely to occur in a class where there is: active involvement of learners in the teaching-learning process; negotiation of individual learning objectives, opportunities for demonstration, practice and feedback; continuous evaluation of learning; and support for learners and teachers. Ogunode & Josiah (2023) observed that the objectives of the schools will not be fully realized without the deployment and utilization of various instructional materials. Instructional materials are teachers' tools for implementing the lesson plan in the classroom. Instructional materials are educational resources that are useful for school administrators, teachers and students. Instructional materials are one of the most important educational resources in the school system that are used for supporting the implementation of teaching and learning programmes. Studies have concluded that adequate funding of educational institutions will lead to the provision of human and material resources

that will help in the implementation of the curriculum in the schools (Ola, 2015). Musa (2016) establishes that there is a significant relationship between adequate funding and the provision of instructional materials in schools.

Capacity Building Programme

Adequate funding of public universities in Nigeria will ensure an effective capacity-building programme for the implementation of the new Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS) in Nigerian universities. A capacity-building programme is necessary for every new curriculum development like Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS). The lecturers (teachers) and school administrators need training and a retraining programme on the methodology to employ for the implementation. For every new curriculum, there are new methods, skills and knowledge required to implement it. Ogunode, & Oluseun, (2020) recommended that one of the criteria to ensure the successful implementation of the curriculum in educational institutions is proper training and retraining of the teachers. Training and retraining of implementers of the curriculum are very critical to the success of the curriculum. The Federal Government has concluded plans to train university lecturers for six months following to ensure the proper implementation of the new curriculum for institutions, Punch (2022) reported that the training aims to make sure that the lecturers thoroughly adopt the strategies for the successful implementation of the new curriculum and that NUC has designed a training phased implementation programme that will commence in January 2023. "Capacity building workshops to train university staff in the development and validation of 30% of the courses allowed each institution to reflect its uniqueness of mission and contextual peculiarities" Punch (2022). Fullan & Crevola, (2003) pointed out that teachers must become highly knowledgeable about the new curriculum content; they must perfect new instructional, approaches; they must know how to manipulate the educational environment, taking into consideration the backgrounds and learning styles of their students. Such support often takes the form of in-service training or staff development. In-service training or staff development is necessary for teachers who lack a deep understanding of the curriculum and its creation. Owihonda & Samuel (2018) opined that in-service programs should be scheduled at convenient times for curriculum implementers. Open discussions on new curricula should be scheduled throughout the implementation process. Such discussions allow implementers to express objections or concerns and consequently reduce opposition. Effective in-service programs must also evaluate whether curricula are achieving their objectives and whether they are in harmony with the school district's philosophy and approach. In-service sessions can and do have merit but in some ways, they fracture the flow of curriculum development and implementation. Colin *et al.*, (2007) argued the characteristics of effective professional in-service programs. Such programs must fit into the schools that provide them. Effective in-service programs result from collaborative efforts and address the needs of those who will be affected by the new curricula. They are flexible enough to respond to the staff's changing needs. They spread knowledge of the new curriculum and increase people's commitment to it. For example, teachers in one school might learn about the curriculum from teachers at other schools, or even from schools in other countries (Owihonda, & Samuel 2018). Ogunode & Emmanuel (2023); Ogunode & Oluseun (2020) and Omebe (2014) argued that adequate funding of the universities will help to ensure human capital development in the universities across the country.

Curriculum Monitoring and Evaluation

Adequate investment in the university system in Nigeria will guarantee effective monitoring & evaluation of the new development Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS) for university implementation in Nigeria. Monitoring & evaluation is very critical in curriculum implementation in educational institutions. Monitoring & evaluation helps to determine the extent to which the curriculum has been achieved. Monitoring & evaluation helps to evaluate progress and diagnose the programme. Monitoring & evaluation of curriculum implementation is done by both the school administrators and agencies saddled by the

government to monitor the implementation of the school curriculum. Adequate investment in the universities may help the university administrators provide necessary human and materials that will ensure quality monitoring and evaluation of the Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS) in the various universities. Abubakar (2014) observed that for effective monitoring and evaluation of curriculum in educational institutions to be implemented and for the attainment of monitoring and evaluation of objectives to be realized, there is a need for huge investment in the educational sector.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The Nigerian university has been given a new curriculum for implementation by the National university commission an agency of the federal government saddled with the responsibilities of developing curricula for the universities and supervising the universities. The curriculum is titled Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS).

The implementation of the Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS) depends on the availability of human and materials resources in the respective universities especially funds. Fund availability and adequacy have been identified as key for the effective implementation of new curricula like the Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS). This paper looked at the importance of adequate funding of the Nigerian university system as a panacea for the effective implementation of the Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS) in the universities.

The paper concludes that adequate funding of the Nigerian university system will lead to the effective implementation of the Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS) in Nigerian universities. Adequate funding will also guarantee the provision of adequate staff (academic and non-academic staff), infrastructure facilities, instructional materials, capacity-building programmes and curriculum monitoring and evaluation.

The paper suggested that the federal and state governments should adequately fund the universities for effective implementation of the Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS) curriculum in universities across the country.

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